

# Quotes from Law School Admissions Deans on Letters of Recommendation

## **1. How important is the title of the letter writer?**

“The title of the recommender is of little importance. What the recommender says about the applicant is of much more importance. It is also important that the letter of recommendation illustrates that the recommender really knows the applicant.”

“It is important to the extent that someone with a well known title knows the applicant well and can provide a comprehensive evaluation of him or her as a future scholar or lawyer, then those kinds of letters will never hurt an applicant. But it is more important that the applicant gets a letter from someone who knows them well and can speak to their abilities instead.”

“It’s not important. We could care less unless it’s the Pope or someone like that, but it’s not that important. We see many senators write letters and applicants don’t realize that it’s the same letter they wrote for someone else. However it matters when it comes from academic professors.”

## **2. What makes for a good letter of recommendation?**

“How well the recommender knows the applicant; how well the recommender can speak of the applicant’s academic abilities, professional capabilities, character, integrity, and potential success in law school.”

“If the professor knows the applicant well. Nothing is better than that and you can tell when that person wants to write that letter and admires the applicant. You can tell whether they know the person or not.”

## **3. What makes for a bad letter of recommendation?**

“A generic letter that does not address the personal attributes of the applicant is not a good letter of recommendation. A letter from someone with a “big name” who obviously does not know the applicant personally is also a weak letter of recommendation.”

“Someone not saying good things about you. They have to make sure their letter writer knows them well. Easier in a small school to get to know your professors, but my advice to an applicant would be that if you’re not in conversational relationship with them currently, then talk to them, remind them who you are, tell them your plans, why you want to go to law school and why you chose them. Don’t underestimate their importance.”

“When a friend of the family writes it. We also see a lot of Utah letters from the bishop or a religious leader, and there we see a lot of problems and wonder whether the person knows the individual or not. It’s better when the person has supervised the individual. Someone who has supervised them, such as their mission president or their zone leader, could write good letters too. But the worst letters come from friends of the family.”

## **4. What if a student doesn’t know any professors very well?**

“Still find someone who can evaluate your intellectual, academic, and work ethic ability. It might be an employer who writes this. If students have been out of school for a while, we know they don’t have contact with professors, and unfortunately nothing substitutes for the letter of a professor, but employers are good too. No family members, please.”

“That’s their personal choice. They ought to get to know one. If they come from an undergrad institution and they can’t get one letter, then that’s odd.”

“Get to know them. You’re still in school. Go to their office hours, they’re not just for those who need help in class. It’s too bad if you haven’t, you should.”